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ABSTRACT

While societies and their languages continually change in response to internal and external circumstances, there are proactive measures that can be implemented to either maintain the particular direction in which that language is moving or to reverse it. Parents and educators can effectuate positive change, individually and collectively. Some conditions that affect language change are the origin of the contact situation; status differential in power and economics; cultural values; demographics; status of the writing system; literacy; dialect diversity; interlingual distance; and mass media. Language planning and policy formation is but one factor impacting the course of a language. In early 1997, officials of the Federated States of Micronesia, part of the United States administered Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, drafted a national language policy to promote the development and expansion of the local languages and cultures and to improve the acquisition of English and other international languages. The premise that proactive language change to reverse language loss is a critical part of a larger social change was put forth by Joshua Fishman, a prominent sociolinguist. His eight-stage planning theory to strengthen local languages has been used as a description of, as well as a prescription for, reversing language loss. (Contains 20 references.) (RS)

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PREL BRIEFING PAPER

PACIFIC RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Language Change and Language Planning and Policy

by Joan Shigemoto*

This paper provides an overview of the complex factors that affect societal language change. Based on writings from scholars in linguistics, education, political science, history, law, sociology, and anthropology, the understandings from this "sociology of language" can inform individual and community decisions in language planning and policies.

Languages change. On a personal level, in day-to-day communication, this may not be easily apparent or obvious. We are so intimately connected to our language that we may fail to see its changes, in much the same way that our closeness to our children obscures perception of their development. But languages do indeed change. Some languages flourish and expand and some languages die. The above illustration depicts how the communication pattern in one family shifts from one language to another until communication between generations becomes difficult or ceases altogether. This is often the case in immigrant families as the children integrate into mainstream society and begin to lose their home language. Another example of language change is the observation in Pohnpei that the "high language" of respect used by the royal clan and also to address them is slowly dying out with a diminishing number of people capable of speaking it (Tawerilmang, 1996).

Communication between generations becomes more difficult as children lose their home language. (Note that the middle generation - the mother - codeswitches to communicate with the child.)

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Given that languages are organic and dynamic, like the cultures that give birth to them, it is not surprising that they share the fate of the societies of which they form a part. A society that is robust with the resources to develop economically, socially, and culturally also gives rise to an expanding language, as is evident in the spread of English and the dominance of the United States in global economy and world affairs. Some people attribute the spread of English to survival of the fittest, a normal and natural course of evolution. They argue: Doesn't contact between two societies usually result in the subordination and sometimes extinction of the weaker society and their language? Why should we care that languages die?

In an eloquent response, Diamond (1993) states that we should all care about the fate of languages because of the connection between language and culture. He argues that when a language is lost, much more than the sounds and structure of that language are gone. Each language is inextricably tied up with a unique view of the world, belief system, and literature, regardless of whether the literature is written or not. A language is the culmination of thousands of years of a people's experience and wisdom. Moreover, it is the vehicle that transmits and perpetuates that wisdom. Imagine the tragedy English-speakers would feel at the loss of Shakespeare's works. The loss of traditional chants, songs, and dances is just as devastating to Native Hawaiians. For describing the objects, interests, and values of the Hawaiian world, no language other than Hawaiian will ever be adequate.

A language is the culmination of thousands of years of a people's experience and wisdom.

The personal devastation of the loss of one's culture and language is described by Diamond as a "cultural disintegration." He explains that when a people have been told for years that their language and their culture are worthless, they come to believe it. This negative group identity is associated with low status in the society, poor educational attainment, unemployment, poverty, etc. However, when groups possess a strong and positive cultural identity, even if they are poor, they will be better able to eventually contribute to society.

Yet another reason to recognize and understand language change is that some languages die by our own hands. Diamond states that in most cases, language loss is gradual and occurs through the long course of the integration of one society with another via political unification, mobility, intermarriage, or education. However, a direct and deliberate way to eradicate a language is by banning and punishing its use. Explicitly articulated governmental policies have been formulated in an effort to assimilate minority language groups into the officially sanctioned language(s) of nation-states. For example, in Hawai'i in the 1890s, educators attempted to foster the use of English by forbidding the use of Hawaiian (Schutz, 1994). But there is a growing acceptance of the notion of language as a fundamental human right. The United Nations drafted a document establishing the human rights of indigenous peoples. The *Universal Declaration on Indigenous Rights* includes linguistic rights and the right to education in the mother tongue. It states that indigenous peoples have "the right to develop and promote their own languages, including a literary language, and to use them for administrative, judicial, cultural, and other purposes." Indigenous people also have "the right to all forms of education, including in particular the right of children to have access to education in their own languages, and to establish, structure, conduct, and control their own educational systems and institutions" (cited in Ricento & Hornberger, 1996, p. 414).

All of us are language users. Which language we choose to use and how we use it, that is, the choices we make on an individual and daily basis, determine the communication pattern in a society. This ultimately determines whether our languages die or thrive. The most crucial aspect of language survival is for children to both learn the language and use it among themselves. A young child in the Hawaiian immersion program very simply acknowledged her own responsibility for preserving her language by saying: "Inā 'a 'ole wau 'ōlelo I ka'u 'ōlelo, e make ana 'o ia." [If I don't speak the language, it will die] (E ola Ka 'Olelo Hawai'i videotape, 1996).

This paper synthesizes writings from the academic domains of the sociology of language and language planning and policy, to raise educators' and policymakers' understanding about the numerous and complex forces that affect language change. These academic domains are informed and broadened by scholars in linguistics, education, political science, history, law, sociology, and anthropology. While societies and their languages continually change in response to internal and external circumstances, there are proactive measures that can be implemented to either maintain the particular direction in which that language is moving or to reverse it. While the language we use is influenced by forces in the sociopolitical and economic context, language changes need not be deterministic or fatalistic and we do not have to accept change passively. As parents and educators, we can effectuate positive change, individually and collectively. Auerbach (1995) emphasizes the transactional dynamic of language change: "The day-to-day decisions that practitioners make inside the classroom *both shape and are shaped by* the social order outside the classroom." [italics added] (cited in Ricento & Hornberger, 1996, p. 421).

Language Shift

Documentation of language change in the Pacific shows that while there are some language revitalization efforts, the trend is toward language loss of the indigenous Pacific languages and a corresponding expansion of English (Huebner, 1986; Topping, 1992; Schutz, 1994; Tawerilmang, 1996). What sociolinguists label "language shift" best describes this phenomenon. Dorian contends that *language shift* is "the gradual displacement of one language by another in the lives of community members" (cited in Huebner 1987). Huebner (1987) adds that language shift can be either partial or complete:

> Complete societal language shift results in an additional language becoming the mother tongue of community members. A partial language shift may be manifested in the displacement of one language by another for specific functions. Partial language shift sometimes is accompanied by language skill attrition, the loss of proficiency in one or more of the language skills: writing, reading, speaking or understanding. Language shift can occur rapidly, sometimes within a generation (p. 180).

Some conditions that affect societal language change:

- *Origin of the contact situation*
- *Status differential in power and economics*
- *Cultural values*
- *Demographics*
- *Status of the writing system*
- *Literacy*
- *Dialect diversity*
- *Interlingual distance*
- *Mass media*

Language shift is judged, at times, as desirable but it is also seen as tragic, depending largely on who is doing the judging, "but it is invariably to the social conditions that one must look to understand the attitudes and values which accompany language shift" (Paulston, 1994, p.20). Researchers have identified major social conditions that influence the shift and maintenance of languages. The following discussion briefly describes these.

Origin of the contact situation

Voluntary migration, especially of individuals and families, results in the most rapid language shift. Annexation and colonization tend to result in much slower language shift, if at all (Paulston, 1994). For example, a Palauan family migrating to the US mainland may lose its mother tongue in one generation, as previously illustrated. The same family would not experience such a dramatic loss if it stayed in its homeland.

Status Differential in Power and Economics

The power relationship among speech communities and its effect on their languages is well-documented. In a study of African languages and their socio-political status, Mansour (1993) examines the power differential between groups and concludes that it is equality—not necessarily equality of size but of similar level of socio-eco-

nomic development—that promotes maintenance of indigenous languages and societal bilingualism. The sociolinguistic situation in Africa parallels that of the American-affiliated Pacific islands in many ways. Both regions have a colonial history in which official languages were inherited from the colonizers and superimposed on a multilingual region of indigenous languages. The official languages occupy a particular domain, namely that of administration, government, education, and the media, whereas indigenous languages are found primarily in the domains of family and friendship. Mansour claims that indigenous languages are more susceptible to language shift because of their limited function of serving social interactional needs.

In other post-colonial settings, however, indigenous languages thrive. A state of stable bilingualism exists in Paraguay where a vital indigenous language coexists with Spanish, the colonial language (Engelbrecht & Ortiz, 1983). One of the reasons for this is that the speakers of the indigenous language are not associated with poor, rural, marginal, socially and culturally dislocated groups. The socio-economic and political status of the speakers contributes to the prestige of their language. The sociolinguistic situation in Paraguay is in contrast to other Latin American countries where the indigenous languages, associated with marginal groups, are shifting to the more dominant colonial languages.

Cultural Values

Kulick (1994, p. 7) posits that ethnic identity or "the way in which the expression of positive and highly valued aspects of the self comes to be bound to expression through a particular language" is the most crucial factor influencing the rate and finality of language shift. Language is an important marker of ethnic identity. Attachment to language is as strong as people's regard of themselves as a social group, which is influenced largely by how the larger society regards them. A negative ethnic identity contributes to the low prestige of the ethnic group's language which, in turn, makes it more susceptible to shifting to a high prestige language, such as English.

The spread of Western lifestyles and ways-of-thought are felt throughout the Pacific, especially today with technology shrinking the global distance and making once remote villages more open, and arguably, more vulnerable to the wider world. Crawford (1995, p. 5) believes that the penetration of Western capitalistic and individualistic ideology powerfully threatens native communities and their languages that encode conflicting values of interdependence and sharing.

Demographics

The size of the speech community reflects the vitality and potentiality for language shift or maintenance. For example, the dramatic decline in both the number and the percentage of Hawaiians in Hawai'i resulted in not only the decline in native language literacy skills, but also the loss of Hawaiian as a first language (Huebner, 1987).

Movements of people will affect language use. People leaving their homes in search of jobs or education often contribute to the loss of their home language. Mobility often leads to intermarriage with other language speakers, and many of these homes use English to communicate (Crawford, 1995).

Literacy

Written literacy increases the usefulness of a language, thereby expanding the use of the language, by providing a market for its products. However, Mackay(1989) notes that in societies with oral traditions, languages can be maintained through the use of radios and the production and dubbing of films and videotapes. In India, where two-thirds of the population are illiterate, Indian languages remain strong due in part to an active local film industry.

A language is more useful and therefore more resistant to language shift when there is active and prolific production of reading material—books, newspapers, magazines. Mackay (1989) stresses that literacy cannot and must not have only utilitarian functions, such as the dissemination of knowledge via the written media. The written language should also be the natural mode of expression of an indigenous literature.

Status of the Writing System

A writing system legitimates literacy efforts which, in turn, contribute to the cultural production and vitality of a community. Mackay (1989) states that a government may try to promote the status of a language by providing a standard writing system, a standard orthography with official dictionaries and grammars, and even a terminology service. In the 1970s, there was a massive effort in the Pacific to standardize the writing and spelling systems and to develop dictionaries and grammars. The continuing controversies over acceptance of the new systems severely hinders the development of native language educational materials (Spencer, 1992).

Dialect and language diversity

Some societies are more diverse than others in the numbers of dialect and language speakers. In complex multilingual societies, where speakers of various dialects and languages must communicate with each other, a common language, or *lingua franca*, arises either naturally in the course of necessary economic transactions, or through governmental policy that establishes an official language. For example, in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, approximately half of the population consists of immigrants (US Census, 1990). English is the official language and is expanding due in part to its function as a *lingua franca* among the Commonwealth's diverse population.

Interlingual distance

The differences in vocabulary and grammar between two languages are factors in the communication patterns between speakers of different speech communities. If the languages or dialects are close and mutually comprehensible, it allows for more contact between the groups (Mackay, 1989). For example, the Carolinian language spoken on the outer islands of Yap is very similar to the Chuukese language spoken by the islanders in Chuuk. Speakers from these two communities can interact with each other in their respective language without resorting to English (J. Kasian, personal communication, April 1997). This phenomenon contributes to the maintenance of the indigenous languages.

Mass Media

The impact of American mass media in films, music, television, and video cassettes in Pacific societies is noticeable even in once remote and isolated villages. The western mass media have injected their own brand of images, music, cultural heroes, and values into a cultural space that is very different and sometimes at odds with them. It could be argued also that mass media are damaging to local languages because they have displaced traditional pastimes, such as engaging in local crafts like canoe-building or listening to stories, which are transmitted through the indigenous languages.

Language Planning and Policy

Language planning and policy formulation is but one factor impacting the course of a language. Language planners are involved in the selection of official or national languages, the development of writing systems, the preparation of dictionaries, grammars, and textbooks, the promotion of literacy, and the standardization, modernization, and terminological enrichment of both majority and minority languages (Pousada, 1996). The work of language planners is closely tied to that of educational planners, because it is within the sphere of formal education that language management is usually carried out. Language policies can either direct efforts to strengthen and expand a particular language or can contribute to its demise. Whatever their intended outcomes, language policies and planning are common and are helpful to recently decolonized territories and multilingual entities.

An Example of a Language Policy

In early 1997, officials of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), part of the US administered Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands drafted a national language policy to promote the development and expansion of the local lan-

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guages and cultures and to improve the acquisition of English and other international languages. "The language policy of the Federated States of Micronesia is to enhance the economic growth and social development through recognition of language as the carrier of the values and cultures which make us unique as a people and as the medium which we communicate across the FSM and with the world" (Federated States of Micronesia Language Policy 1997, p. 1). The FSM language planners recognized the centrality of the education system in the formulation and implementation of the language policy. It reiterated the primary role of education in developing basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities for the future workforce.

In its policy, all languages within FSM are viewed as national resources. A National Language and Culture Institute was proposed to manage and maximize these resources. The establishment of a semi-autonomous governmental agency having internal as well as external funding sources would ensure the longevity and continuity of effective programs. This was seen as critical in light of the demise of many successful bilingual programs in the past as soon as external funding stopped.

The FSM language policy represents an ambitious plan to marshal and manage the linguistic resources of a nation to achieve desired educational, political, and economic goals. Mansour (1993) compares language planning to building a multi-story building to house many families. If the building occupants are to live in peace, it is necessary to establish ground rules for their interaction. Drawing from the experiences of African societies, Mansour warns that language planning should not be implemented in a "top down" fashion for the purpose of eliminating regional and/or ethnic differences, but stresses that language policy decisions should fit into a framework of larger social goals for which a consensus has been reached.

Fishman's Eight Stage Planning Theory to Strengthen Local Languages

The premise that proactive language change to reverse language loss is a critical part of a larger social change is best put forth by Joshua Fishman, a prominent sociolinguist. He proposes that the most effective language policy decisions go beyond institutional initiatives and reach into the heart of society by attempting to change the speech patterns in the home and community (Fishman, 1996). His eight-stage theoretical framework has been used as a description of, as well as a prescription for, reversing language loss. Fishman states that once members of a community decide that their culture is worth maintaining, they can do so only by becoming self-regulatory and seizing control and responsibility for their own language, an important marker of their culture. To achieve intergenerational linguistic continuity and societal bilingualism, the language must be fostered in as many domains of individual and social life as are acceptable and feasible (Fishman, 1991).

Fishman's Eight-Stage Planning Theory to Strengthen Local Languages

Stage 8	The language is spoken by a few isolated older people. It is close to extinction.
Stage 7	There are cultural events and ceremonies.
Stage 6	Children are learning language from parents, neighborhood, and community.
Stage 5	There is local literacy in the community, literacy programs in native languages.
Stage 4	The language is in the schools.
Stage 3	The language is in the work sphere.
Stage 2	The language is in the local mass media, local government.
Stage 1	The language exists at the highest levels in government, universities, national media. (Fishman, 1991)

Stage 1 classifies a language that is at its strongest possible position; stage 8 is that of a language very close to extinction. Once a language is located on the scale, efforts can be directed towards strengthening the language in the specified domains.

A language at stage 8 has only a few older people who still speak the language, and who are isolated from one another. The role of linguists is critical at this stage to re-establish community norms of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Fishman (1991) notes that linguists are "notoriously poor at motivating and organizing the societal devotion that is required if stage 8 is to be transcended and if the process of reversing language shift is to become a social movement rather than merely a monograph or a textbook" (p. 397). Hence, it is necessary that they work with language planners and community leaders for their efforts to extend beyond academic exercise.

At stage 7, those who speak the language regularly are all beyond child-bearing age and have not taught the language to their children. It is close to extinction because there is no intergenerational continuity. There are no young speakers even though there is a large, active, elderly population that is involved in cultural events and ceremonies. While cultural events are important at this stage, they must be transcended and extended to daily living activities of the home.

Stage 6 is the key stage where most efforts should focus. Here the language is still used in the home, from parents to children, and the home is surrounded by a community that speaks the language. This is where most of language learning, identity formation, and establishment of social bonds takes place for children, early in life, through interactions with parents and grandparents. Although it is not easy to plan language efforts that focus directly on home-family-neighborhood-community building, Fishman warns that if this stage is not satisfied, all else can amount to little more than biding time until the language, and much of what goes with it, is lost.

At stage 5, languages have local literacy in the community, neighborhood, family, and home. The availability of the language in written form broadens its range and use. Fishman suggests that stage 5 entails after-school programs for adults and children, to promote reading and writing in the native language.

At stage 4, the language is used in the schools. It is crucial for the positive development of the language that the schools value and support the cultures of language groups and that they share authority for curriculum and staffing with the language groups.

Stage 3 pertains to the worksphere. With the dominance of English as the language of commerce and world affairs, Fishman admits that this domain is particularly difficult for local languages to penetrate. Although there are possible tactics to introduce and maintain local languages in the workplace, it is the positive link between work and home/community that must constantly be nurtured.

Stage 2 involves local/regional governmental services, i.e., those that have direct, daily contact with the people, including the local mass media. Because of the reach of the media and government agencies into the lives and homes of people, it is important to strengthen language at this stage. However, government services and mass media in local languages alone will not strengthen the language of the home. Home language between generations must be strong before governmental services and local mass media can make real contributions to reverse language shift.

Stage 1 pertains to language in higher education, worksphere, national mass media, and national government. Language use at this level will make a definite contribution to the vitality of a language. However, Fishman urges continued attention and nurturing of language use in the home/community sphere before it will have more than "bureaucracy-building and elite-building effects" (Fishman, 1991, p. 404).

In summary, stages 5 to 8 focus on establishing and strengthening the language, and stages 1 to 4 transcend the language aspect of the efforts in search of increased power-sharing. The most critical domain where efforts to stabilize or restore language should be concentrated is the home/neighborhood/community. Fishman stresses that

the vitality of a language lies in informal interactions in the home and community. It is there where intergenerational mother tongue transmission occurs. Efforts to maintain or revitalize languages are essentially *community-building*, in and through the mother tongue. The role of schools and other institutions is to foster the language as links with the outside world. Fishman reiterates that, "Living languages are not primarily *in* institutions, but *above* them, *beyond* them, *all around* them" (1995).

Conclusion

The preservation and strengthening of a language cannot be left to language planners, government leaders, and linguists. As language users, we all contribute to the patterns of language use in our society, due, in large part, to the values and attitudes we hold. A positive regard for our own culture and language supports their vitality. We also hold values and attitudes towards *other people's* cultures and languages which contribute to *their* group identity and survival. As teachers, these values and attitudes impact daily on how we interact with our students and how we teach. As parents, we contribute to the expansion of a language by using it with our children and we contribute to its extinction by not using it. As members of a community, we can succumb to the powerful forces of modernization or we can awaken to the infinite array of possibilities from ancestral *and* contemporary cultures, and from them, forge a personal and community identity that is healthy, just, and ideally situated to face the challenges of the 21st century. We can help build the kind of community we want for ourselves and our children. And one of the ways to do this is by strengthening our language.

In order to strengthen a society's language, language planning is a necessary component. It is not enough, however, to counteract prevailing trends of societal language loss. It is critical to involve educators, parents, community members, political leaders, the media, and the business community because they are all involved in changing public attitudes and behaviors necessary for reversing language shift. The inadequacy of language maintenance efforts that lack the enthusiasm and involvement of the people is expressed by a Native American Indian, Richard Littlebear (cited in Henze & Davis, 1997):

> Some of us said, "Let's get our languages into written form" and we did, and still our Native American languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said, "Let's make dictionaries for our languages" and we did, and still the languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said, "Let's get linguists trained in our languages" and we did, and still our languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said, "Let's train our own people who speak our languages to become linguists" and we did, and still our languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said, "Let's apply for a federal bilingual education grant" and we did, and got a grant, and still our languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said, "Let's let the schools teach the languages" and we did, and still the languages kept on dying.
>
> Then we said, "Let's develop culturally-relevant materials" and we did, and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, "Let's use language masters to teach our languages" and we did, and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, "Let's tape record the elders speaking our languages" and we did, and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, "Let's videotape our elders speaking and doing cultural activities" and we did, and still our languages kept on dying.

Then we said, "Let's put our native language speakers on CD-ROM" and we did, and still the languages kept on dying.

Finally, someone will say, "Let's flash-freeze the remaining speakers of our languages so when technology catches up these speakers can be thawed out and revived and we will have ready-made Native American languages speakers" and we will do that and these thawed out speakers will awake to a world in the distant future where they are the only speakers of their languages because all of the other speakers of their languages will be gone and no one will understand them.

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